

SUMMARY OF WILDERNESS IN THE WHITE RIVER NATIONAL FOREST AND COLORADO

Mature Forest in Terms of Wilderness Designation

The White River National Forest encompasses approximately 2,270,000 acres total, 754,344 (33.2%) acres are wilderness. That, according to the DEIS, represents **24% of Colorado's wilderness and "the largest proportion of any national forest in Colorado." p. 404 of Forest DEIS.**

By 1980, this Forest had already undergone the scrutiny of five separate sets of proposals that designated wilderness. These include the following designations:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year Established</u>	<u>Total Acreage</u>
1. Maroon Bells	1964	163,483 acres
2. Flat Tops	1975	196,360 acres
3. Eagles Nest	1976	133,496 acres
4. Hunter-Fryingpan	1978	73,736 acres
5. Collegiate Peaks	1980	35,671 acres
Holy Cross	1980	113,842 acres
Snowmass	1980	incl. in Maroon Bells
<u>Raggeds</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>16,832 acres</u>
Total		733,420 acres

In other words, following a rigorous inventory process described below, in the first 16 years following passage of the Wilderness Act, **97% of the currently designated wilderness in the White River National Forest was considered and designated as such.** This Forest has been thoroughly and repeatedly inventoried, and is relatively mature as far as designating wilderness. In the last nineteen years, 20,924 acres were added (Hunter-Fryingpan addition and Ptarmigan Wilderness) via Public Law 103-77, the 1993 Colorado Wilderness Act which was H.R. 631 and Congressman McInnis was an original cosponsor.

New Wilderness Recommendations

Eight new wilderness parcels adjacent to existing wilderness areas are proposed by this alternative. All of these eight areas are in addition to the 754,344 acres of existing wilderness in the White River National Forest. During the two formal wilderness reviews in past years, a good job was done in identifying and designating the best wilderness candidate lands.

SUMMARY OF WILDERNESS IN THE WHITE RIVER NATIONAL FOREST AND COLORADO

<u>Recommended Wilderness</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Connected Wilderness</u>
#19 Black Lake West	900 Approx.	Eagle Nest
#20 Black Lake East	700 Approx.	Eagle Nest
#21b Ute Pass	1,800 Approx.	Ptarmigan
#21c Acorn Creek	900 Approx.	Ptarmigan
#84 Treasure Mtn.	1,500 Approx.	Raggeds
#77 North Independence	4,500 Approx.	Hunter-Frying Pan
#75 Hunter	1,200 Approx.	Hunter- Frying Pan
#57 No Name	3,800 Approx.	Holy Cross
Total 16,022		

Forest Inventory Process History

Wilderness is defined as “an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation...with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.” (Section 2 of the Wilderness Act of 1964).

The Wilderness Act of 1964 initially designated 9.1 million acres of wilderness in the United States, including the Maroon Bells Wilderness. The Wilderness Act also directed the Forest Service to review the agency’s remaining 5.5 million acres of primitive areas for potential wilderness designation, within ten years. This inventory, termed RARE I, was subsequently abandoned.

In 1977, the Forest Service began a third review, as a result of being directed by Congress, of 62 million acres of national forest land, termed RARE II. In 1979, this second formal review of the forests resulted in an additional 15 million acres being recommended for designation as wilderness. In Colorado, the wilderness recommendations of RARE II were considered very early in the process and Public Law 96-560 embodied a significant portion of the recommendations, especially in the White River National Forest. Later, RARE II was challenged in court, and in 1983 the Department of Agriculture announced a reevaluation of all RARE II recommendations.

As a result of these intensive formal reviews by the Forest Service, as well as intervening reviews and additions to the wilderness in the Forest by Acts of Congress, the White River National Forest lands with high wilderness characteristics have been thoroughly inventoried and designated as wilderness. Most of the remaining identified roadless areas do not reflect the same high quality of the wilderness currently designated in the Forest.

Comparison to Other Forests in Colorado

The **percentage of currently designated wilderness in the White River National Forest is larger than any other forest in Colorado**. The following graph indicates comparable ratios of wilderness to non-wilderness in other Colorado forest management units, as well as other forested areas in the United States. There is little comparison: the White River National Forest has a significantly greater percentage than other comparable National Forests in Colorado and elsewhere in the United States.